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BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

In re Application: Thompson et al.

Serial No.: 09/576,462

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Art Unit: 3621

Examiner: James Reagan

For: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PROCESSING IMPORT/EXPORT
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The real party in interest is CustomsPoint, Inc., which is the assignee of the entire right and interest in the present Application.

1. CERTIFICATION UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.8

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to Mail Stop Appeal Brief-Patents, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450, on April 30, 2004.

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II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

There are no appeals or interferences known to Appellants, the Appellants' legal representative, or assignee which will directly affect or be directly affected by or have a bearing on the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

III. STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-53 and 55-62 are pending in the Application, and also stand rejected.

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

There were no amendments to the claims or specification filed in the last response by Appellants.

V. SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In many countries, including the United States ("U.S."), one of the earliest sources of revenue to the government was the assessment of duties against imported goods. Specification, page 1, lines 11-13. Until recently, each country tended to use their own singular system for categorizing imported goods. Specification, page 1, lines 13-14. Since 1988, many countries of the world have begun using a harmonized system of tariff classification that was adopted at the International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System. Specification, page 1, lines 14-16. The tariff numbers provide governments a systematic way to categorize all imported goods, to make duty assessments, to gather trade statistics, to share trade data with other countries, and for other purposes. Specification, page 2, lines 3-6.

U.S. importers are required by law to take responsibility for providing to U.S. Customs the correct tariff classification for each imported item and to pay the correct duty on the goods imported. Specification, page 2, lines 10-12. With passage of the Customs Modernization Act in 1993 the importer became fully liable for the accuracy of information presented - regardless of who does the customs compliance work. Specification, page 2, lines 14-15.

The process of identifying and assigning tariff numbers to commodities is often inexact, tedious, and manually performed. Specification, page 2, lines 16-17. Importers and customs brokers spend a large amount of time assigning tariff numbers to imported goods, and it is not uncommon for this process to be performed repeatedly for the exact same commodity due to the inability to access the information that may have already been determined during a previous importation. Specification, page 2, line 18 – page 3, line 2.

Therefore, what is needed is a system whereby the importer can take an active role in managing their commodity/tariff number assignments prior to importation; when most tariff decisions have already been made prior to an importation; and when the predetermined tariff numbers can be quickly and efficiently assigned to each associated imported item. Specification, page 5, lines 5-9.

The present invention addresses the above needs by implementing a Product Classification Database (PCD) 110 (Figure 1), which consists of a database and interface that utilizes Internet standards and protocols to enable users to input and retrieve commodity information and the associated tariff information through an Internet site. Specification, page 6, lines 3-6.

Authorized users will be able to access the database 110 from any PC with Internet access 105 and will be able to create product databases 114, update/add/delete items 111 from existing databases, and perform various reporting 117 and archiving functions. Specification, page 6, lines 11-14. Authorized users will be able to upload invoice information 102 either electronically or manually. Once the invoice data is uploaded, the application will automatically assign tariff numbers to all the recognized invoice items 109 and will generate a summary report 116 in a form appropriate for incorporation into a customs entry 118.

VI. ISSUES

1. Are claims 1-34, 36-53 and 55-62 properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Pool et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 6,460,020) and David M. Kroenke, "Database Processing," Seventh Edition (hereinafter "*Kroenke*")?

2. Is claim 35 properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Pool/Kroenke* in view of "Customs and Trade Automated Interface Requirements"?

VII. GROUPING OF CLAIMS

Each of claims 1-53 and 55-62 is to be considered individually for the reasons set forth in Section VIII.

VIII. ARGUMENT

1. Claims 1-34, 36-53 and 55-62 are not properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Pool* and *Kroenke*.

A claimed invention is unpatentable if the differences between it and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art. *Graham vs. John Deere Co.*, 383 US 1 (1966). The ultimate determination of whether an invention is or is not obvious is a legal conclusion based on the underlying factual inquiries including: (1) the scope and content of the prior art; (2) the level of ordinary skill in the prior art; (3) the differences between the claimed invention and the prior art; and (4) objective evidence of non-obviousness.

Claim 1 recites the transferring of the invoice data from the first terminal from the server hosting a database of product identifiers and tariff classification information particular to each of the product identifiers. In rejecting such claim, the Examiner has asserted that this step reads on the selection of the customer being transmitted to the processing center/first database/system operator cited in column 4, lines 20-31 of *Pool*. All this language cited in *Pool* states is that the flowchart of Fig. 1 provides the interactions for the customer, including databases owned by the system operator controlling the transaction system of the present invention, as well as external databases. This language alone is insufficient to support the Examiner's assertion that the transferring step of claim 1 is taught in *Pool*. Second, the processing center/first database/system operator does not host a database of product

identifiers and tariff classification information particular to each of the product identifiers, and the Examiner will find it impossible to find such a recitation within *Pool*. Thus, the customer being transmitted to the processing center/first database/system operator, as asserted by the Examiner, does not disclose the transferring step in claim 1. Third, all the Examiner asserts is that the customer is sent to the processing center/first database/system operator. This does not teach that invoice data is transferred. Fourth, nowhere within *Pool* is it taught or suggested to host a database of product identifiers and tariff classification information particular to each of the product identifiers. Fifth, the closest that *Pool* comes to disclosing such a database is the third database described in column 6, line 54-column 7, line 5. However, this third database merely is a lookup table of harmonized international tariff tables and classification system. This third database does not contain product identifiers and tariff classification information particular to each of the product identifiers. As a result of the foregoing, *Pool* does not disclose the transferring step of claim 1.

Furthermore, the "matching" step is not taught within *Pool*, since the third database in *Pool* lists commodity codes pertaining to product types, such as shown in the website at URL <http://www.hmce.gov.uk/business/importing/classifying/faqs.htm> attached hereto, and does not disclose what is recited in claim 1 where a product identifier is entered into the database where a matching process outputs the tariff classification information as a result. In other words, under the assumption the Examiner has made that the commodity code in *Pool* is the same as the product identifier recited in claim 1, inputting the product identifier into the third database in *Pool* would be the same as inputting the commodity code into the third database in *Pool*, but that is not how the third database operates. The third database in *Pool* operates by permitting the user to find the commodity code using a general description of the product type. Conversely, the present invention operates by inputting a specific product id into a database having tariff classification information and outputting a tariff classification matched to the particular product identifier inputted into the database. In summary, under the Examiner's interpretation of claim 1, there would be no reason to perform the matching and outputting steps, since

the commodity code is already known, if it is to be assumed that the commodity code is the same as the product identifier. As a result, *Pool* does not teach the process recited in claim 1 in the same manner in which the invention is recited in claim 1.

Yet still further, as a result of the foregoing, the outputting step in claim 1 is not disclosed in *Pool*, since *Pool* will not produce a data record that includes the tariff classification information associated with the product identifier identifying the product.

Applicants respectfully note that the Examiner has not pointed to any teachings within *Kroenke* for disclosing any of the limitations of claim 1. An applicant may specifically challenge an obviousness rejection by showing that the Examiner based his obviousness determination on incorrect factual predicates. *In re Rouffet*, 47 U.S.P.Q.2d 1453, 1455 (Fed. Cir. 1998). This also applies to the applications of *Pool* to the remainder of the claims hereinafter.

The foregoing arguments are also applicable to claims 10, 19, 24, 51, 61 and 62.

With respect to claims 2-3 and 11-12, the Examiner has asserted that *Pool* discloses the data record as an order sent to vendor. The problem with such an assertion is that the data record specifically recited within the claims includes tariff classification information associated with a product identifier identifying the product, whereas the order disclosed in *Pool* does not. Thus, Applicants respectfully assert that the Examiner has failed to prove a *prima facie* case of obviousness that *Pool* suggests outputting the data record which includes either emailing or downloading such a data record to a second terminal coupled to the network. Yet still further, there is absolutely no disclosure within *Pool* that a data record is downloaded in response to access of the data record in the server by a second terminal. In fact, the Examiner has completely failed to address this claim limitation, and thus this alone is sufficient to assert by Applicants that the Examiner has failed to prove a *prima facie* case of obviousness.

With respect to claims 11 and 12, the Examiner has failed to interpret these claims under *In re Donaldson* as previously requested by Applicants. MPEP § 2181.

With respect to claims 5, 14 and 21, the Examiner has asserted that it would have been obvious for the vender of *Pool* to access the system via a website as it is not uncommon for many websites to have areas of the site sectioned off according to the information contained therein, such as when there are icons indicating "wholesalers" and "retailers," as *Pool* teaches that the system is accessible by a website. Applicants respectfully traverse this assertion by the Examiner, since the Examiner has failed to support this obviousness determination with any objective evidence.

With respect to claim 8, under the Examiner's interpretation of claim 1, the database would have to be the third database referred to in the last paragraph of column 6 of *Pool*. Since this database contains lookup tables of the harmonized international tariff tables and classification system, and since such a database would be static and not updateable, *Pool* cannot teach claim 8. Further, the Examiner has admitted that these claims are not disclosed in *Pool* on pages 7-8 of Paper No. 20, but instead makes an unsupported opinion that such claims are obvious. Applicants traverse such an assertion. Such an unsupported opinion by the Examiner cannot support a *prima facie* case of obviousness. Claim 26 is patentable for similar reasons as claim 8.

Claims 9 and 18 refer to the recording of the results of the matching process, which matches the product identifier identifying the product to the product identifiers in the database. In the rejections of claims 1 and 10, the Examiner has asserted that this process is performed with respect to the third database, which is discussed in the last paragraph of column 6. Nowhere within this language in *Pool* is it taught or disclosed to record the results of such matching processes. Applicants further traverse the Examiner's unsupported assertion on page 8 of Paper No. 20 that recording results of the matching step is obvious. Such an unsupported rejection cannot support a *prima facie* case of obviousness.

With respect to claim 10, the Examiner in Paper No. 16 has finally addressed these "means plus function" limitations as required under MPEP § 2181. However, the Examiner has completely ignored the vast majority of the limitations within

claim 10, but instead has mostly focused the attention at the first three words within each limitation.

With respect to the means for inputting limitations, the Examiner has ignored the remainder of that limitation that recites that the means for inputting inputs invoice data associated with an import/export transaction at a first terminal coupled to the network, wherein the invoice data includes a product identifier identifying a product to be transported in the import/export transaction. For this reason alone, the Examiner has failed to prove a *prima facie* case of anticipation. Selecting goods by a customer using a keyboard or mouse does not equate to the claimed limitation.

With respect for the means for transferring limitation in claim 10, the Examiner has merely asserted that this reads on the selection of the customer being transmitted to the processing center/first database/system operator disclosed in *Pool*. Again, the Examiner has ignored the remainder of this claim limitation which recites that the invoice data is transferred from the first terminal to a server hosting a database of product identifiers and tariff classification information particular to each of the product identifiers. For this reason alone, the Examiner has failed to prove a *prima facie* case of anticipation in rejecting claim 10. The Examiner has not specifically looked at the support within the present specification for this claim limitation when attempting to compare it to the teachings of *Pool*. MPEP §2181.

With respect to the means for matching limitation of claim 10, the Examiner has merely asserted that this reads on the commodity codes of the third database. The problem with this assertion by the Examiner is that it is a mischaracterization of the teachings of *Pool*. The third database is merely a lookup table used by the user. The matching process recited in the claim is not performed by such a user.

With respect to claim 19, the Examiner's reasoning in producing the rejection is in error. The Examiner asserts that the server recited in claim 19 reads on the website described in column 3, lines 41-44. This is not possible. The invention described in *Pool* involves a customer accessing a website that runs the international transaction program described in *Pool*. Column 3, lines 40-42. This program accesses the third database to arrive at a commodity code as described in column 6, lines 51-67.

With respect to claim 17, the foregoing arguments with respect to claim 8 are also applicable. Furthermore, Applicants respectfully assert that the Examiner must interpret claim 17 under *In re Donaldson*. MPEP § 2181.

In conjunction with the server, this server running the international transaction program does not reside on the same server as the one containing the third database. In fact, *Pool* specifically teaches that this third database and the other databases accessed by the transaction program are external databases. Column 3, line 67. Furthermore, claim 19 specifically recites that the server hosts the database of product identifiers and corresponding import/export transaction information. Since such a server in accordance with the Examiner's interpretation is the third database, it cannot be that the server in claim 19 reads on the website of column 3, lines 41-44, since this server, under the Examiner's interpretation, would have to be containing the third database, which under the *Pool* disclosure is a database that is external to the server running to international transaction program. Therefore, Applicants' server in claim 19 does not read on the website of column 3, lines 41-44. In fact, the Examiner admits in the rejection that the first computer recited in claim 19 is the computer that operates the international transaction system. This is the computer described in column 3, lines 41-44.

Further, the Examiner has asserted that Applicants' second computer reads on the customer's computer in *Pool*. Applicants respectfully disagree, since there is no disclosure within *Pool* that the customer's computer described in *Pool* is operable for accessing the data record over the Internet wherein the data record includes the import/export transaction information corresponding to the at least one product identifier.

Yet still further, claim 19 recites a program operable for matching the at least one product identifier with a product identifier contained in the database of product identifiers. There is no disclosure within *Pool* of a program that performs such a matching process. All that is disclosed in the last paragraph of column 6 is a manual lookup by the customer accessing the third database. There is no disclosure or any suggestion of a program for performing such a matching process.

Claim 22 recites that the data record is transformed into a customs report for transmittal to a customs entity. The language cited by the Examiner in column 10, lines 22-27 of *Pool* does not disclose such a claim limitation. This language teaches that a title or commercial invoice is created once electronic funds are transferred to a vendor from a local clearinghouse, wherein the vendor will utilize a connection to the transaction system to generate such an electronic title or commercial invoice. This language does not teach or disclose that such a commercial invoice includes import/export transaction information corresponding to the at least one product identifier.

Claim 23 is patentable over the cited prior art for the same reasons as given above with respect to claim 8. Further, *Pool* does not teach a program for updating the third database.

With respect to claims 24 and 25, the Examiner has asserted that the third programming steps read on the second user of the third database. This is not possible. The third programming steps recited in claim 24 are programming steps within a computer program product adaptable for storage on a computer readable medium. A user, or person, is not adaptable for storage on a computer readable medium.

Claims 24 and 25 are also patentable under the same reasoning as given above with respect to claim 19.

With respect to claim 26, this claim recites additional limitations, which the Examiner has not in any way specifically addressed. For this reason alone, Applicants respectfully assert that the Examiner has failed to prove a *prima facie* case of anticipation in rejecting claim 26. Furthermore, the arguments given above with respect to claim 8 are also applicable with respect to claim 26. Furthermore, there is no teaching within *Pool* that establishes a third web page, accessible by a third user at a third terminal coupled to the Internet using a web browser, that permits the third user to update the product identifiers and corresponding tariff classifications in the third database. In fact, the third database disclosed in *Pool* is not accessible to a user over the Internet using a web browser so that such a user could change the commodity codes stated therein.

With respect to the rejection of claims 27-28, the Examiner has asserted that one should see column 5, lines 2-58. No language within column 5 teaches that the product identifier is unique to a particular company. Nor is there any language within column 5 or anywhere else in *Pool* that the import/export transaction is associated with a particular company. In fact, the Examiner has admitted that *Pool* does not specifically disclose these claim limitations. Yet still further, nowhere within *Pool* is it taught or disclosed that the database of product identifiers and tariff classification information is customized on a per customer basis to ensure that the matching of the product identifiers with the tariff classification numbers is in compliance with local customs regulations.

The Examiner takes Official Notice that it is old and well-known in the financial and transactional arts to assign company unique part numbers or product ID numbers to specific products, as well as associating identifiable transactions with specific companies. Applicants respectfully traverse such an assertion, thus requiring the Examiner to support his Official Notice with objective evidence.

Claim 30 is patentable over *Pool* for reasons given above with respect to claim 1. Claim 30 recites that the matching step results in the tariff classification information being assigned to the product identifier included in the invoice data. Since the Examiner has equated the product identifier with a commodity code, using such an interpretation claim 30 would recite that the matching step results in the commodity code being assigned to the commodity code included in the invoice data. Since this is not logical, it is clear that *Pool* does not teach claim 30.

With respect to claim 31, the same arguments given above with respect to claim 8 are also applicable. Furthermore, the Examiner has admitted that the language within claim 31 that states that the modifying step is performed "to ensure an accuracy of associations between the product identifiers and corresponding tariff classification information." Instead, all the Examiner asserts is that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the database arts to update product information because it provides a powerful tool for organizing and updating products, etc. Paper No. 20, page 8. The problem with such an assertion is that it is not

supported with any objective evidence. Nor, does such an assertion by the Examiner address the specific claim language of claim 31.

Claim 32 is also not disclosed by *Pool* under the Examiner's interpretation, since the invoice data inputted does not already include a commodity code as taught by *Pool*, since the third database is being accessed to arrive at the commodity code. Therefore, it does not make sense under the Examiner's interpretation for invoice data, which is transferred from the first terminal to the database, to list each product identified with a product identifier.

With respect to claim 34, the order disclosed in *Pool* is not the same as a customer entry report.

With respect to claims 38, 50 and 55, *Pool* does not teach wherein the database of product identifiers and tariff classification information is customized on a per customer basis to ensure that the matching of the product identifiers with the tariff classification numbers is in compliance with local customs regulations. Such compliance is nowhere to be found anywhere within *Pool*. The Examiner's rejection on page 18 of Paper No. 20 is without any objective supporting, amounting solely to his subjective opinion.

Claim 39 specifically recites that at least one product identifier is unique to a particular company. The Examiner has not in any way addressed this claim limitation. For this reason alone, the Examiner has failed to prove a *prima facie* case of anticipation in rejecting claim 39. Furthermore, the commodity code disclosed in *Pool* is not unique to a particular company. Again, the Examiner is respectfully reminded that the Examiner's rejection relies upon the Examiner interpreting the commodity code as equivalent to the product identifier recited within the claims.

With respect to claim 42, it is impossible for *Pool* to disclose the limitations recited in claim 42, since under the Examiner's interpretation that the commodity code is the same as the product identifier, in *Pool* if there was a matching process, essentially the commodity code would be assigned to the commodity code, which does not make any sense. That is because in *Pool*, a product type is used to manually look up a commodity code, wherein the product type is provided over the network connection to the third database. In the present invention, the product identifier is

sent over a network connection where the matching program assigns import/export transaction information to the product identifier. There is no matching program disclosed in *Pool*.

Claim 43 is patentable over the cited prior art for the same reasons as given above with respect to claim 31. Furthermore, the Examiner has not in any way addressed the limitation that a program is operable for modifying the database to ensure legal compliance of associations between the product identifiers and corresponding import/export transaction information. Yet still further, nowhere within *Pool* is such a limitation taught or disclosed.

Claim 52 is patentable over the cited prior art for reasons similarly as given above with respect to claim 43. Furthermore, the Examiner has not in any way specifically addressed this claim limitation.

Claim 55 is patentable over the cited prior art for reasons similarly as given above with respect to claim 52. Furthermore, the Examiner has not in any way specifically addressed this claim limitation.

Claim 44 is not disclosed by *Pool*, since the Examiner has interpreted the product identifier recited in the claims as being the same as the commodity code. As a result, under the Examiner's interpretation, if the invoice data was sent over to the third database, it would naturally not have the commodity code, since that is what is retrieved from the third database. As a result, it is impossible for *Pool* to teach that the invoice data list products to be imported/exported, and each product is identified with a product identifier, since the invoice data, under the Examiner's interpretation, does not yet have the commodity code, since that is retrieved from the third database at a later time.

With respect to claim 53, the Examiner has not in any way addressed the step of "facilitating passage of the products through the country's customs office using the master report created as a result of the comparing step trade." For this reason alone, the Examiner has failed to prove a *prima facie* case of anticipation. Additionally, nowhere within *Pool* is this step taught or disclosed. All that is disclosed in columns 11 and 12 is that the electronic title or commercial invoice can be in electronic format and transmitted along with a packing list to a customs department.

This is not the same as creating a master report using the customs enter report where the product numbers and the invoice are each assigned a harmonized tariff number. In rejecting claim 53, the Examiner has merely asserted that the steps of claim 53 read on the purpose of the system of *Pool*. This is not a proper rejection, since it does not in any way cite specific objective language within *Pool* that teaches these claim limitations.

Claim 55 recites maintaining compliance of the database with current tariff regulations. *Pool* does not in any way teach such a step.

Claims 56-59 are patentable for the same reasons as given above with respect to claims 51 and 53.

Claim 61 is patentable over the cited prior art for similar reasons as given above with respect to claims 1, 19, 24, 53 and 56.

Claim 62 is patentable over the cited prior art for the same reasons as given above with respect to claims 1, 19, 24, 53, 56, 27, 36, 39, 46 and 51.

With respect to claim 54, it is insufficient for the Examiner to make a blanket assertion that it is obvious that the step of inputting further comprises scanning in a paper invoice at the first terminal, wherein the paper invoice contains the invoice data. All obviousness rejections must be supported with objective evidence and not merely the Examiner's unsupported opinion.

All of the Examiner's obviousness rejections, including the rejection of claim 35 discussed hereinafter, rely upon the combination of *Pool* with *Kroenke*. However, the Examiner does not in any way specifically recite any portions of *Kroenke*, but is merely asserting that the teachings of *Pool* could be modified using typical database processing techniques such as disclosed in *Kroenke* to arrive at the present invention. This is a wholly insufficient basis for proving a *prima facie* case of obviousness of the claims. The Examiner is essentially just asserting that the claims are obvious, and has merely thrown in the *Kroenke* reference in an attempt to have some objective evidence for his assertions. In fact, in a telephone conference between Applicants' attorney and the Examiner, the Examiner asserted that he added in the *Kroenke* reference because he considers the present invention to be merely an implimentation over the Internet of a previously performed manual tariff classification operation.

The problem with the foregoing, is that this is not in accordance with the law. And, in fact, it is the epitome of a hindsight reconstruction of the claims. The best defense against the subtle but powerful attraction of a hindsight-based obviousness analysis is rigorous application of the requirement for a showing of the teaching or motivation to combine prior art references. *In re Dembiczak*, 50 U.S.P.Q.2d 1614, 1617 (Fed. Cir. 1999). The Examiner has merely provided his unsupported subjective opinion as to how the *Kroenke* and *Pool* references can be combined to address the claims of the present invention. An Examiner can satisfy this burden of obviousness only by showing some objective teaching leading to the combination. *Id.* Combining prior art references without evidence of such a suggestion, teaching, or motivation simply takes the inventors' disclosure as a blueprint for piecing together the prior art to defeat patentability - - the essence of hindsight. *Id.* Broad conclusory statements, such as those given by the Examiner in these rejections, regarding the teaching of multiple references, standing alone, are not evidence. *Id.*

In conclusion, Applicants respectfully assert that the Examiner has failed to prove a *prima facie* case of obviousness in rejecting all of the foregoing claims.

2. Claim 35 is not properly rejected under *Pool/Kroenke* in view of "Customs and Trade Automated Interface Requirements."

Claim 35 is rejected under *Poole* and *Kroenke*, and further in view of "Customs and Trade Automated Interface Requirements." Applicants have already discussed above the deficiencies in the Examiner's rejection for combining *Pool* and *Kroenke*. For this reason alone, claim 35 is patentable over the cited prior art references, since the Examiner has failed to prove a *prima facie* case of obviousness. The Examiner further asserts that the third prior art reference, and specifically Appendix G states that tariff numbers out of sequence is an error, and thus in order to comply with U.S. Customs such tariff numbers must be in order or sorted. Again, the Examiner is completely relying upon hindsight reasoning in combining these three prior art references to arrive at a rejection of claim 35. The Examiner's motivation to combine these references is his own subjective opinion, unsupported by any facts.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPENDIX

Claim 1: A method for processing import/export transactions over a network, comprising the steps of: inputting invoice data associated with an import/export transaction at a first terminal coupled to the network, wherein the invoice data includes a product identifier identifying a product to be transported in the import/export transaction;

transferring the invoice data from the first terminal to a server hosting a database of product identifiers and tariff classification information particular to each of the product identifiers;

matching the product identifier identifying the product to the product identifiers in the database; and

outputting a data record in response to the matching step, wherein the data record includes tariff classification information associated with the product identifier identifying the product.

Claim 2: The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step of outputting the data record includes the step of e-mailing the data record to a second terminal coupled to the network.

Claim 3: The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step of outputting the data record includes the step of downloading the data record to a second terminal coupled to the network.

Claim 4: The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the step of outputting the data record includes the step of printing the data record.

Claim 5: The method as recited in claim 3, wherein the data record is downloaded in response to access of the data record in the server by a second terminal using a web browser.

Claim 6: The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the inputting step further comprises the step of:

electronically transmitting the invoice data from the first terminal to the server.

Claim 7: The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the inputting step further comprises the step of inputting the invoice data into a web site associated with the database.

Claim 8: The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of: updating the database from a third terminal coupled to the network.

Claim 9: The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of: recording results of the matching step into a transaction database hosted by the server.

Claim 10: A system for processing import/export transactions over a network, comprising:

means for inputting invoice data associated with an import/export transaction at a first terminal coupled to the network, wherein the invoice data includes a product identifier identifying a product to be transported in the import/export transaction;

means for transferring the invoice data from the first terminal to a server hosting a database of product identifiers and tariff classification information particular to each of the product identifiers;

means for matching the product identifiers identifying the product to the product identifiers in the database; and

means for outputting a data record in response to the matching of the product identifier identifying the product to the product identifiers in the database, wherein the data record includes tariff classification information associated with the product identifiers identifying the product.

Claim 11: The system as recited in claim 10, wherein the outputting means includes a means for e-mailing the data record to a second terminal coupled to the network.

Claim 12: The system as recited in claim 10, wherein the outputting means includes a means for downloading the data record to a second terminal coupled to the network.

Claim 13: The system as recited in claim 10, wherein the outputting means includes a means for printing the data record.

Claim 14: The system as recited in claim 12, wherein the data record is downloaded in response to access of the data record in the server by the second terminal using a web browser, wherein the network is the Internet.

Claim 15: The system as recited in claim 10, wherein the inputting means further comprises:

means for electronically transmitting the invoice data from the first terminal to the server.

Claim 16: The system as recited in claim 10, wherein the inputting means further comprises means for inputting the invoice data into a web site associated with the database.

Claim 17: The system as recited in claim 10, further comprising:
means for updating the database from a third terminal coupled to the network.

Claim 18: The system as recited in claim 10, further comprising:
means for recording results of the matching step into a transaction database hosted by the server.

Claim 19: A system for processing import/export transactions over the Internet, comprising:
a server, coupled to the Internet, hosting a database of product identifiers and corresponding import/export transaction information.
a first computer, coupled to the Internet, operable for uploading invoice data, containing at least one product identifier associated with an import/export item, to the server over the Internet;
a program operable for matching the at least one product identifier with a product identifier contained in the database of product identifiers and outputting a data record including import/export transaction information corresponding to the at least one product identifier, and
a second computer, coupled to the Internet, operable for accessing the data record over the Internet.

Claim 20: The system as recited in claim 19, wherein the first computer uploads the invoice data via a web link associated with the server.

Claim 21: The system as recited in claim 19, wherein the second computer accesses the data record via web link between the second computer and the server.

Claim 22: The system as recited in claim 19, wherein the data record is transformed into a customs report for transmittal to a customs entity.

Claim 23: The system as recited in claim 19, further comprising:
a program operable for updating the database.

Claim 24: A computer program product adaptable for storage on a computer readable medium and operable for processing an import/export transaction over the Internet, comprising:

first programming steps operable for establishing a first web page, accessible by a first user at a first terminal coupled to the Internet using a web browser, that permits the first user to input invoice data associated with an import/export transaction, wherein the invoice data includes a product identifier for a product to be transported in the import/export transaction;

second programming steps operable for matching the product identifier included in the invoice data to a database of product identifiers and corresponding tariff classifications resulting in an output of a data record containing a tariff classification matched with the product identifier identifying the product to be transported in the import/export transaction; and

third programming steps operable for establishing a second web page, accessible by a second user at a second terminal coupled to the Internet using a web browser, that permits the second user to output the data record through the second web page.

Claim 25: The computer program product as recited in claim 24, wherein the database is stored on a server coupled to the Internet.

Claim 26: The computer program product as recited in claim 24, further comprising:

fourth programming steps operable for establishing a third web page, accessible by a third user at a third terminal coupled to the Internet using a web browser, that permits the third user to update the product identifiers and corresponding tariff classifications in the database.

Claim 27: The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the product identifier is unique to a particular company.

Claim 28: The method as recited in claim 27, wherein the import/export transaction is associated with the particular company.

Claim 29: The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the first terminal is coupled to the server over the network.

Claim 30: The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the matching step results in the tariff classification information being assigned to the product identifier included in the invoice data.

Claim 31: The method as recited in claim 1 further comprising the step of:
modifying the database to update the product identifiers and/or tariff classification information particular to each of the product identifiers to ensure an accuracy of associations between the product identifiers and corresponding tariff classification information.

Claim 32: The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the invoice data lists products to be imported/exported, and each product is identified with a product identifier.

Claim 33: The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the tariff classification information is a harmonized tariff number for a particular country.

Claim 34: The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of creating a customs entry report for the import/export transaction.

Claim 35: The method as recited in claim 34, wherein the customs entry report is sorted by tariff numbers.

Claim 36: The method as recited in claim 34, further comprising a step of creating a master report to facilitate the import/export transaction.

Claim 37: The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of displaying a harmonized tariff schedule in a split screen during the matching step.

Claim 38: The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the database of product identifiers and tariff classification information is customized on a per customer basis to ensure that the matching of the product identifiers with the tariff classification numbers is in compliance with local customs regulations.

Claim 39: The system as recited in claim 19, wherein at least one product identifier is unique to a particular company.

Claim 40: The system as recited in claim 39, wherein the import/export transaction is associated with the particular company.

Claim 41: The system as recited in claim 19, wherein the first computer is coupled to the server over the Internet.

Claim 42: The system as recited in claim 19, wherein the matching program results in the import/export transaction information being assigned to the product identifier included in the invoice data.

Claim 43: The system as recited in claim 19, further comprising:
a program operable for modifying the database to update the product identifiers and/or import/export transaction information corresponding to each of the

product identifiers to ensure legal compliance of associations between the product identifiers and corresponding import/export transaction information.

Claim 44: The system as recited in claim 19, wherein the invoice data lists products to be imported/exported, and each product is identified with a product identifier.

Claim 45: The system as recited in claim 19, wherein the import/export transaction information is a harmonized tariff number for a particular country.

Claim 46: The computer program product as recited in claim 24, wherein the product identifier is unique to a particular company.

Claim 47: The computer program product as recited in claim 45, wherein the import/export transaction is associated with the particular company.

Claim 48: The computer program product as recited in claim 24, wherein the matching steps result in the tariff classifications being assigned to the product identifiers included in the invoice data.

Claim 49: The computer program product as recited in claim 24, wherein the tariff classifications are harmonized tariff numbers for a particular country.

Claim 50: The computer program product as recited in claim 24, wherein the database of product identifiers and tariff classifications is customized on a per customer basis to ensure that the matching of the product identifiers with the tariff classifications is in compliance with local customs regulations.

Claim 51: A method for importing products into a country, comprising the steps of:

creating an invoice representing a purchase of the products by a customer resident within the country, wherein the invoice lists the products by product number;

uploading invoice data over a network to a server from a workstation coupled to the server over the network, wherein the invoice data is an electronic version of the invoice;

creating a database of customer products and tariff classification information, wherein the database is accessible by the server, wherein the database comprises product numbers for products particularly associated with the customer, wherein the product numbers are each assigned a harmonized tariff number particular to the country;

comparing the product numbers in the invoice data to product numbers in the database to compile a customs entry report where the product numbers in the invoice are each assigned a harmonized tariff number;

using the customs entry report to create a master report to facilitate entry of the products into the country, wherein the master report includes the harmonized tariff numbers assigned to each of the product numbers; and

sending the master report to a government customs office.

Claim 52: The method as recited in claim 50, further comprising the step of updating the database to ensure that the associations of the harmonized tariff numbers with the customer's product numbers are in compliance with the country's customs regulations.

Claim 53: The method as recited in claim 50, further comprising the steps of: importing the products into the country; and

facilitating passage of the products through the country's customs office using the master report created as a result of the comparing step.

Claim 55: The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of maintaining compliance of the database with current tariff regulations.

Claim 56: The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of importing the product into a country using the data record.

Claim 57: The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of exporting the product into a country using the data record.

Claim 58: The method as recited in claim 55, wherein the data record is used to facilitate the importing of the product into the country.

Claim 59: The method as recited in claim 31, wherein the data record is used to create a customs entry report to facilitate the importing of the product into the country.

Claim 60: The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of linking to a harmonized tariff schedule in a split screen with the data record.

Claim 61: A method comprising the steps of:

inputting invoice data associated with an import/export transaction at a first terminal coupled to a computer network, wherein the invoice data includes a product identifier identifying a product to be transported in the import/export transaction;

transferring the invoice data from the first terminal to a server hosting a database of product identifiers and tariff classification information particular to each of the product identifiers;

matching the product identifier identifying the product to the product identifiers in the database; and

outputting a data record in response to the matching step, wherein the data record includes tariff classification information associated with the product identifier identifying the product;

importing a product into a country using the data record.

Claim 62. A method for importing products into a country, comprising the steps of:

- creating an invoice representing a purchase of the products by a customer resident within the country, wherein the invoice lists the products by product number;

- uploading invoice data over a network to a server from a workstation coupled to the server over the network, wherein the invoice data is an electronic version of the invoice;

- creating a database of customer products and tariff classification information, wherein the database is accessible by the server, wherein the database comprises product numbers for products particularly associated with the customer, wherein the product numbers are each assigned a harmonized tariff number particular to the country;

- comparing the product numbers in the invoice data to product numbers in the database to compile a customs entry report where the product numbers in the invoice are each assigned a harmonized tariff number;

- using the customs entry report to create a master report to facilitate entry of the products into the country, wherein the master report includes the harmonized tariff numbers assigned to each of the product numbers;

- sending the master report to a government customs office;

- importing the products into the country; and

- facilitating passage of the products through the country's customs office using the master report created as a result of the comparing step.